

## **COUNCIL – 5 SEPTEMBER 2023**

### **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

#### **QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR C SEWELL TO COUNCILLOR T SAFFELL**

"Having recently been frustrated by the Planning process at this Council, I would like to ask the following question:

Call-ins from Ward Members/neighbouring Ward Members are refused on a regular basis, from what I gather from my colleagues, even when strong material planning considerations are put forward.

I believe the refusal to allow call-in is decided by the Chairman of the Planning Committee, along with the Strategic Director of Place.

When a Ward Member/neighbouring Ward Member puts forward a call-in, they do so with prior local knowledge, and because of local constituents' concerns. The Strategic Director of Place, Planning Officers and Chair won't always be aware of these 'local' matters and totally rely on the Planning Portal for resident comments – this portal isn't always useable or accessible by members of the public.

Will consideration please be given to at least allow Ward Members/neighbouring Ward Members to be present at the discussion appertaining to the particular application they have the concern about? Phone calls or emails refusing call-ins aren't giving Ward Members the clarity necessary to provide the right information to concerned constituents on contentious planning issues."

#### **REPOSENSE FROM COUNCILLOR T SAFFELL TO COUNCILLOR C SEWELL**

"The process for call in, is set out in the Constitution (page 37-38) under the terms of reference of the Planning Committee, paragraph 2.4 which sets out those matters which are reserved to Committee:

*2.4 Excluding those types of applications detailed at paragraph 1.3 above, the determination of an application where:*

*(a) a ward member of the ward to which the application relates or the ward member of an adjoining ward (if that adjoining ward is materially impacted by the application) has notified the relevant Strategic Director (in writing or by email within 4 weeks of being notified of the application) that the application should be determined by the Planning Committee; and*

*(b) in the opinion of the Chair having consulted the relevant Strategic Director (or his nominated officer):*

*(i) the notification is supported by one or more material planning grounds; and*

*(ii) the item relates to a matter of local concern,*

*Provided that where the relevant ward member or neighbouring ward member has a disclosable pecuniary interest in the application in question, this “call-in” shall automatically be triggered for consideration by the Chair under (b) above.*

*Where the Chair decides that an application does not satisfy (b)(i) or (ii) above, written reasons shall be given to the requesting member.*

There is currently no constitutional requirement for the Chair to contact members regarding each call-in request that they make. However, at a meeting of the Planning Cross Party Working Group in June 2020, it was agreed to slightly amend the process so that the Chairman of Committee would speak to the ward member on their call-in reasons before a final decision was made. I understand that the new Chair of Planning Committee is now making contact with ward members to discuss the call-in requests and to understand their concerns before discussing with officers and making a final decision. It is also open to the ward member to contact the Chair about their call-in requests.

As I’m aware that some members continue to have concerns about the current call-in procedure, as indicated by the question raised, I would suggest that this matter is discussed at the next Planning Cross Party Working Group, to explore whether any minor changes to the process maybe required. I will ask for a meeting of the Planning Cross Party Working Group to be arranged for the Autumn.”